

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BONN
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S E C R E T STATE 008330

FOLLOWING 1977 TELEGRAM STATE 295497 DATED NOVEMBER 29
SENT TUNIS IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

S E C R E T STATE 295497

FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, TS

SUBJECT: COMSIXTHFLT INVITED USE MENZEL-BOURGUIBA

REFS: (A) TUNIS 7793 (DTG 311019Z OCT 77)
(B) TUNIS 8128 (DTG 111634Z NOV 77)

1. WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF DISCUSSIONS REPORTED REFTELS A AND B. IN PARTICULAR, WE DO NOT WISH TO GIVE TUNISIANS THE IMPRESSION THAT WE NO LONGER ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR DECISION TO ALLOW

THE SOVIET

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MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON TO USE REPAIR FACILITIES AT MENZEL-BOURGUIBA. IT IS IMPORTANT, THEREFORE, THAT WE TAKE NO ACTION NOW THAT COULD BE INTERPRETED BY THE TUNISIANS AS "LEGITIMATIZING" THEIR DEAL WITH THE SOVIETS.

2. OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO BRING ABOUT THE TERMINATION OF SOVIET USE OF THE YARD. ALTHOUGH THIS MAY BE UNLIKELY

SOON, WE WANT TO KEEP PRESSURE ON THE TUNISIANS TO AT LEAST HOLD SOVIET USE TO AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE SIXTH FLEET IS IN A POSITION TO OFFER SUFFICIENT BUSINESS TO "COMPETE" WITH THE SOVIETS, AND EVEN IF THE CAPABILITY OF THE YARD WERE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED, THE PROBLEM JUST WOULD BE RAISED TO A HIGHER MAGNITUDE OF BUSINESS. SIXTH FLEET USE WOULD REMAIN MARGINAL IN TERMS

OF SIXTH FLEET REQUIREMENTS AND PROBABLY IN TERMS OF COMMERCIAL BENEFIT TO TUNISIA. THE NET RESULT OF ANY U.S. EFFORT AT THIS TIME TO QUOTE BALANCE UNQUOTE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS TUNISIA GAINS FROM SOVIET USE COULD BE TO ALLOW TUNISIANS TO CLAIM THEY WERE BEING "EVEN HANDED" AND THEREBY WIGGLE OFF THE HOOK. HOWEVER, WE RECOGNIZE THAT AT SOME FUTURE DATE IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO CONSIDER SOME OCCASIONAL USE OF THE SHIPYARD BY THE SIXTH FLEET.

3. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS HAS RECEIVED THE REPORT OF THE INITIAL SURVEY OF THE YARD BY CAPTAIN CLINT TAYLOR. HE REPORTED THAT THE SIXTHFLT CAN USE THE FACILITY, BUT WILL HAVE TO WORK WITHIN LIMITED TUNISIAN CAPABILITIES UNTIL SOME INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY IS ESTABLISHED. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD AGREED VERBALLY WITH THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE SHIPYARD, MR. DOUIK, THAT A SHIP WOULD BE REPAIRED IN THE YARD FROM ABOUT 20 JAN TO 05 FEB 78 AND THAT A TEAM OF ABOUT FIVE SURVEYORS WOULD

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VISIT THE YARD THE WEEK OF 21 NOVEMBER WITH A WORK PACKAGE FOR THE SHIP. CAPTAIN TAYLOR NOTED THAT AFTER THE FOLLOW-ON SURVEY A CONTRACT WOULD HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED FOR AWARD BY 10 DECEMBER.

4. AMBASSADOR SHOULD TAKE EARLY OCCASION TO DISCUSS AGAIN WITH APPROPRIATE GOT SENIOR OFFICIALS SUBJECT OF SOVIET USE, AND U.S. DESIRE THAT THEY TERMINATE SUCH USE. IN THIS RESPECT, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO LET THE TUNISIANS KNOW OF RECENT CONCERN EXPRESSED WITHIN NATO THAT APPARENT AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS RE MENZEL-BOURGUIBA SIGNALS A SHIFT IN ORIENTATION OF TUNISIAN FOREIGN POLICY (THIS WAS ASSERTION IN NATO STAFF DOCUMENT WHICH WE HAVE SUGGESTED BE CHANGED). YOU SHOULD EMPHASIZE POINT THAT SOVIET USE OF TUNISIAN REPAIR FACILITIES RUNS REAL RISK OF TARNISHING TUNISIA'S IMAGE AMONG ITS FRIENDS IN CONGRESS, WHO ARE SENSITIVE TO ACTIONS WHICH WOULD INCREASE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES OF SOVIET MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON.

5. CONCERNING THE IMPLIED COMMITMENT TO THE TUNISIANS TO MAKE TRIAL USE OF THE YARD, AMBASSADOR SHOULD SEE

THAT APPROPRIATE TUNISIAN OFFICIALS ARE INFORMED THAT THE U.S. HAS DETERMINED AFTER FURTHER STUDY OF NEEDS THAT FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT TO DO SO. IN EXPLAINING WHY THE SURVEYORS HAVE NOT VISITED YARD AND NO SHIP REPAIRS WILL BE SCHEDULED AT THIS TIME, APPRECIATION SHOULD BE EXPRESSED FOR THE FORTHCOMING MANNER IN WHICH THE TENTATIVE PLANS WERE COORDINATED. CHRISTOPHER UNQUOTE CHRSHITOPHER

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